

Dr. Al Fuhr, Ecclesiastes, Session 7, Fear of God Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Fuhr, Ecclesiastes, Session 7, Fear of God, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Al Fuhr's lecture on Ecclesiastes explores the recurring motif of fearing God within the book. He argues that this fear, not a crippling terror but a **reverent acknowledgment of God's authority**, is central to the book's message and not merely a conclusion added later. Fuhr connects this fear of God with the book's emphasis on **enjoying life**, presenting them as complementary rather than opposing concepts. He refutes the idea that the concluding emphasis on fearing God contradicts the rest of the text, showing how it aligns with other passages. Ultimately, he highlights the **practical wisdom** of Ecclesiastes, advocating for a life lived in both joyful experience and responsible awareness of God's judgment.

**2. 13 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Fuhr, Ecclesiastes, Session 7 – Double click icon to play in
Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL]
Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament →
Psalms and Wisdom → Ecclesiastes).**



**Fuhr_Eccles_Session
n07.mp3**

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided excerpt of Dr. Al Fuhr's lecture on Ecclesiastes, Session 7:

Briefing Document: Dr. Al Fuhr on the Fear of God in Ecclesiastes

Overview:

This document summarizes the key themes and ideas presented by Dr. Al Fuhr in his lecture on Ecclesiastes, Session 7, focusing specifically on the motif of the "fear of God" (or reverence) and its integration within the book's message. Dr. Fuhr argues that the fear of God is not merely a concluding point in Ecclesiastes, but rather a central and consistent theme that is interwoven throughout the book's various literary components. He also addresses common misinterpretations of the book, emphasizing its orthodoxy and compatibility with the rest of Scripture.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. The Centrality of the Fear of God:

- Dr. Fuhr emphasizes that the fear of God is not just a conclusion to Ecclesiastes, but a core motif throughout. He states, "I would suggest to you that the fear of God is not again just a conclusion, but it's very much a component to the whole message of the book of Ecclesiastes. It's central to the message of Ecclesiastes."
- He connects the concept of the fear of God to the beginning of knowledge in Proverbs, arguing that in Ecclesiastes, it represents the *end* of wisdom, highlighting its ultimate importance. He suggests the two are not separate but are "one and the same."
- The fear of God is defined not as crippling terror, but as a "proper posture of reverence towards God," an understanding of God's authority and one's own limitations. It is an "orientation to God where mankind realizes that he's not the ultimate authority and control, but rather God is the authority and control."

1. Fear of God and the Inability to Understand God's Ways:

- Ecclesiastes 3:14 is presented as a key verse: "I know that everything God does will endure forever. Nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men might revere him." This is one of the few scriptural explanations as to why God does things the way He does, linking God's actions to a call for reverence.

- Man's inability to comprehend God's ways is linked to the need for a reverent posture before Him. This acknowledgment is seen as fundamental to orthodox wisdom.

1. **Fear of God and the Expectation of Judgment:**

- The expectation of a final judgment is another key motivator for the fear of God in Ecclesiastes.
- Kohelet observes the injustice in the world in places where judgment and justice should be, leading to the idea of a future day of reckoning. He notes, "In the place of judgment, wickedness was there. In the place of justice, wickedness was there."
- Dr. Fuhr highlights Ecclesiastes 3:17: "God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked, and there will be a time for every activity, a time for every deed," emphasizing individual accountability. This is not necessarily a national judgment but rather a personal one.
- This judgment is not detailed in specifics but is an assumption or expectation. The text suggests individuals will "give an account for the deeds that he has done."

1. **Fear of God and Proper Worship:**

- Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 emphasizes the importance of reverence when approaching God, even in worship. "Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools who do not know that they do wrong."
- The manner in which one speaks to God and the haste of one's words reflect their understanding of God's nature and their own relationship with Him. Words are presented as a matter of worship.
- The text notes the separation between the divine and the mortal. "God is in heaven and you are on earth." God is "wholly other" and not just a friend. Vows to God should be taken seriously and fulfilled promptly. "When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it."
- Foolish actions and haphazard words indicate a lack of proper reverence toward God. "Much dreaming and many words are hevel, therefore stand in awe of God."
- Dr. Fuhr makes the comparison to Romans 12:1-2, in which our bodies and actions are to be a form of worship.

1. Fear of God and the Enjoyment of Life:

- Dr. Fuhr highlights how the enjoyment of life and the fear of God are interwoven, not contradictory, in Ecclesiastes.
- He reframes the common understanding that enjoyment of life and fear of God are opposites and suggests they are compatible when understood properly. He states: "the enjoyment of life and the fear of God are very much companions in the book of Ecclesiastes."
- He emphasizes, "the fear of God is not some kind of asceticism and the enjoyment of life is not some kind of hedonism."
- The seventh enjoy-life refrain in 11:9 ("Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth.") is accompanied with the understanding that "for the things which we do, God will bring you to judgment," linking enjoyment with accountability.
- The inevitability of death also serves as a motivation for reverence and living soberly. "Remember your creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come."

1. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 as the Climax:

- Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 serves as the conclusion to the matter: "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or whether it is evil."
- This final statement encapsulates the overarching message of the book.
- Dr. Fuhr pushes back against the idea that this is a later addition or a corrective measure and shows how it fits into the rest of the book and is not a "foil" where the rest of the book is set straight. He highlights that this theme of judgment is consistent throughout Ecclesiastes.
- He highlights similarities to 3:17, 11:9 and 12:1.

1. The Nature of Judgment:

- The judgment described is not solely confined to present circumstances but includes a future reckoning. "By the way, notice this language. God will bring the judgment, both the righteous and the wicked."

- The inclusion of "every hidden thing" suggests a judgment that transcends earthly observation.
- While Ecclesiastes does not detail the judgment concretely, it hints at a future reckoning and responsibility.

1. Ecclesiastes within the Framework of Scripture:

- Dr. Fuhr addresses the common perception that Ecclesiastes is unorthodox, emphasizing its integration within the broader biblical narrative.
- He explains the book is not meant to be viewed as a systematic theology.
- He explores the horizontal perspective of Kohelet and points out that Kohelet did not have knowledge of the Resurrection or Christ.
- Kohelet seeks a solution ("Yitrone") to the futility of life ("hevel"), and though wisdom alone cannot provide that, God is ultimately the one who resolves this problem through Christ. He notes, "What Kohelet was not able to find through wisdom, we do find through Christ."
- He acknowledges, however, that wisdom does offer "tov" - something that is better.

1. Practical Wisdom and the Application of Ecclesiastes:

- Dr. Fuhr emphasizes that Ecclesiastes provides practical wisdom, noting that "even a non-believer, if they were to put into practice the kind of principles and precepts that one finds in the proverbial wisdom of Ecclesiastes, they would more likely find success in life."
- He discusses the "wisdom of probabilistic opportunity," and the need for proper orientation towards God in decision-making.
- He argues that Kohelet encourages people to live fully while also being mindful of God's ultimate authority, encouraging individuals to "live soberly, live in recognition and reverence that there is a God that they must answer to one day."
- He promotes the idea of a "two-sided wisdom coin" that allows one to "grasp life to its fullest, all the while recognizing who is really over them."
- He highlights how the fear of God acts as the beginning of wisdom in Proverbs and the end of wisdom in Ecclesiastes, noting that the fear of God "ties wisdom together."

Conclusion:

Dr. Fuhr's lecture successfully demonstrates that the fear of God is not an isolated concluding thought in Ecclesiastes, but rather an intrinsic part of its message. It is a call for reverence, accountability, and a proper understanding of God's role in the world. This message is interwoven with the call to enjoy the gifts of life, highlighting a balanced approach that integrates present enjoyment with future accountability. Ultimately, the fear of God provides a framework within which to navigate the "hevel" of this world, acknowledging its fallenness while recognizing the hope of future reckoning.

4. Fuhr, Ecclesiastes, Session 7, Fear of God

Ecclesiastes: A Study Guide

Quiz

1. How does the Book of Proverbs portray the "fear of the Lord" compared to how Kohelet presents it in Ecclesiastes? *The Book of Proverbs states that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, while Kohelet sees it as the end of wisdom, suggesting it is the culmination of a wise understanding.*
2. According to the text, why is the "fear of God" important for understanding Ecclesiastes? *The fear of God is a central motif that helps show Kohelet's orthodoxy and it's integrated throughout the book, not just as a conclusion. It's essential for the book's message about living wisely.*
3. Explain the meaning of "yare" in Ecclesiastes 3:14. *"Yare," the Hebrew word for "fear," does not signify terror, but rather a reverence and orientation toward God, acknowledging that He is the ultimate authority.*
4. How does the expectation of future judgment tie into Kohelet's call to fear God? *Kohelet believes there will be a day of reckoning where people will be judged for their deeds. This expectation motivates people to live reverently and fear God.*
5. What does Kohelet suggest about worship and reverence when going to the "house of God" in Ecclesiastes 5:1-7? *Kohelet emphasizes the need to approach God thoughtfully and reverently, listening more than speaking, and fulfilling vows, avoiding hasty actions or foolish words.*
6. How does Kohelet describe the relationship between God and man? *Kohelet emphasizes that God is in heaven and man is on earth, highlighting a separation while acknowledging God's involvement in human affairs. God is not to be treated as just a "buddy" but as wholly other.*
7. What are the "enjoy life" refrains in Ecclesiastes, and how do they connect to the fear of God? *The enjoy life refrains are calls to appreciate the gifts of life, but they are not meant to promote hedonism. The fear of God and enjoyment of life are companions: people are encouraged to enjoy God's gifts while living reverently, mindful of judgment.*
8. What are some common interpretations of Ecclesiastes 12:13-14? *Some scholars see this passage, about fearing God and keeping His commandments, as a later*

addition by an orthodox redactor. Others interpret it as the logical culmination of Kohelet's thought.

9. How does Kohelet's wisdom recognize both the horizontal and the vertical? *Kohelet recognizes the horizontal by assessing the world through observations and the practical precepts of wisdom. The vertical recognition comes from acknowledging that God, who has ultimate authority, will bring a time of reckoning for man's actions.*
10. According to the text, what advantages does the wisdom of Ecclesiastes provide in life, even in a "hevel" world? *While wisdom cannot resolve the curse of the fallen world, it can offer a way to live better, through proper orientation to God, making timely decisions, and recognizing God's gifts.*

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the complex relationship between the "fear of God" and the "enjoyment of life" as presented in the Book of Ecclesiastes. How does Kohelet reconcile these seemingly opposing concepts, and what does this say about his view of human existence?
2. Analyze the role of future judgment in Kohelet's argument for the fear of God. How does this emphasis on judgment impact the overall message of Ecclesiastes, and what implications does it have for the individual's responsibility before God?
3. Explore how Kohelet uses the "under the sun" perspective to shape his theological and philosophical arguments. How does this horizontal view of life contribute to his conclusions about the nature of wisdom, the value of human endeavors, and the limits of human understanding?
4. Evaluate the significance of Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 in relation to the rest of the book. Is it a later addition, a corrective, or the logical conclusion to Kohelet's message? Use textual evidence to support your analysis.
5. Compare and contrast Kohelet's exploration of wisdom in Ecclesiastes with the wisdom literature found in the Book of Proverbs. How do their approaches differ, and what does each book contribute to our understanding of the fear of God, human flourishing, and the complexities of life in a fallen world?

Glossary of Key Terms

Fear of God (Yare): Not a terror-filled dread, but a profound reverence, respect, and acknowledgement of God's authority and holiness, a proper orientation toward God.

Hevel: A Hebrew word translated as "vanity," "meaningless," "futile," or "fleeting," which characterizes the temporary and often absurd nature of life under the sun, highlighting the fallenness of existence.

Under the Sun: A perspective used by Kohelet that refers to the earthly realm and the limitations of human understanding and experience without consideration of divine revelation; it describes life as experienced in the everyday world.

Enjoy Life Refrains: Repeated invitations within Ecclesiastes to appreciate and embrace the good gifts of God in the present, which are to be done without turning into hedonism, while remembering God.

Eschatological Judgment: A future judgment where God will hold all individuals accountable for their actions.

Tov: Hebrew word meaning "good," used by Kohelet to describe the benefit of wisdom and the advantages it provides in this life, but it does not solve the hevel.

Yitrone: Hebrew word meaning "advantage," "profit," or "surplus," which Kohelet seeks for an answer to the hevel problem, which he does not find in the world.

Orthodoxy: Conformity to accepted doctrines or beliefs, particularly in a religious context.

Redactor: An editor of a text, especially one who revises or alters it for publication.

Inclusio: A literary device where a passage begins and ends with similar or identical statements, forming a kind of bracket around a literary unit to indicate its wholeness.

5. FAQs on Fuhr, Ecclesiastes, Session 7, Fear of God, Biblelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Ecclesiastes and the Fear of God

1. **How does the concept of "fear of God" function in the Book of Ecclesiastes, and how does it relate to the book of Proverbs?**
2. In Ecclesiastes, the "fear of God" is not just a conclusion but an integral part of its message, deeply interwoven with the pursuit of wisdom. It represents a posture of reverence and acknowledgment of God's authority, recognizing that God is the ultimate authority, not humankind. While Proverbs sees the fear of God as the *beginning* of knowledge, Ecclesiastes views it as the *end* of wisdom, suggesting that a proper understanding of God is the culmination of a life of seeking knowledge. The fear of God is not portrayed as terror, but as an orientation towards God that shapes one's decisions and actions.
3. **Why does Kohelet emphasize the fear of God in the context of human inability to understand God's ways?**
4. Kohelet emphasizes the fear of God, in part, because humans are inherently limited in their ability to comprehend God's actions and plans. This limitation is highlighted in Ecclesiastes 3:14, which states that God's actions endure forever and are beyond human ability to alter or fully grasp. This inability is not meant to paralyze, but rather to instill a recognition of God's sovereignty, prompting reverence and awe instead of trying to control or fully understand. It is through the acknowledgement of this disparity between the mortal and divine that leads to a proper orientation to God.
5. **How does the idea of future judgment relate to the fear of God in Ecclesiastes?**
6. The expectation of a future judgment is a significant motivator for the fear of God in Ecclesiastes. Kohelet acknowledges that injustices and wickedness often go unpunished in this life (Ecclesiastes 3:16-17), which leads him to believe in a future reckoning where God will judge both the righteous and the wicked. This expectation motivates people to live responsibly and with an awareness that they will ultimately be accountable for their actions. The individual accountability and expectation of eschatological judgment is unusual in comparison to other Old Testament works.

7. How does Ecclesiastes depict proper worship and reverence toward God?

Ecclesiastes promotes careful and intentional worship, cautioning against hasty or thoughtless words spoken before God. It stresses the need to "guard your steps" when approaching God (Ecclesiastes 5:1), emphasizing listening and reflecting over offering sacrifices in a foolish manner. It highlights the separation between the divine and the mortal, urging humility and reverence in the face of God's transcendence. Reverence to God is not just expressed in a formal setting like the temple, but in every way people speak and interact with God and the world.

1. How does Kohelet address the concept of enjoying life in relation to the fear of God?

Kohelet emphasizes that the enjoyment of life and the fear of God are not mutually exclusive but rather are compatible aspects of a wise life. He urges young people to enjoy the days of their youth, while simultaneously acknowledging that they will be held accountable for their actions (Ecclesiastes 11:9). The fear of God, in this context, does not imply asceticism or a denial of joy, but rather a sober and reverent approach to life that recognizes God as the giver of all good things, which are to be enjoyed without sinning. It's a balanced approach that appreciates gifts from God while living reverently toward him.

- 1. Why is the ending of Ecclesiastes, with its emphasis on fearing God and keeping his commandments, significant?**
2. The conclusion of Ecclesiastes, found in 12:13-14, is where Kohelet sums up his message, asserting that fearing God and keeping His commandments is "the whole of man." This is not an abrupt conclusion, added later to correct Kohelet's thought, but an integral part of his overall message. It reinforces that ultimate wisdom comes from a life lived in reverence to God, knowing that all deeds, both good and bad, will be brought into judgment. This ending ties together the book's themes of the fleeting nature of life, the importance of enjoying God's gifts and the acknowledgement of divine authority.

3. **Does Ecclesiastes present any clear solutions to the struggles of life in a fallen world, and if not, what does it offer?**
4. Ecclesiastes does not offer a clear, systematic solution to the problem of life's fallen nature, which is characterized by transience and uncertainty, referred to as "hevel." Kohelet does not present a solution to the curse or death itself. Instead, Kohelet's wisdom provides *tov* (what is good), teaching the value of living wisely and enjoying God's gifts in the present while acknowledging one's mortality and limitations. The book highlights that while wisdom can improve one's experience of life, ultimate answers are outside the scope of human wisdom, something which is later resolved by the work of Christ.
5. **How does Ecclesiastes' perspective on wisdom relate to the idea of God's providence?**

Ecclesiastes demonstrates the importance of practical wisdom for navigating the uncertainties of life in a fallen world. While wisdom is essential for success and navigating life, Kohelet also emphasizes the limits of human control, and calls people to recognize God's active role in the outcome of life events. This balance of human decision-making and awareness of divine providence promotes living life fully, taking advantage of each day, while still recognizing God as the ultimate authority and source of provision. The wisdom of Ecclesiastes is practical, pointing toward the importance of making good choices while recognizing that God is sovereign over all.